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Introduction to the Special Issue: New Insights into the Study of Classroom Emotions: Emerging Research Methods for Exploring the Implications of Positive and Negative Emotions in Language Education Environments

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ABSTRACT

Classroom emotions significantly influence the teaching and learning processes, profoundly shaping students' academic trajectories and teachers' instructional practices. Positive emotions such as enjoyment, enthusiasm, pride, hope, etc. enhance motivation, foster engagement, and contribute to an atmosphere conducive to effective learning. In contrast, negative emotions like anxiety, frustration, boredom, etc. can impede academic functioning and reduce classroom participation. Previous studies on these positive and negative emotions have been constrained by traditional, linear research methods that fail to capture their dynamic and context-sensitive nature. The present special issue addresses this gap by exploring how emerging research methods, notably complexity-informed approaches, can deepen our understanding of classroom emotions. It features 10 empirical studies that collectively highlight the nuanced interplay of emotions in language classrooms and offer innovative approaches to examining them.

Keywords: emerging research methods; complexity-informed approaches; classroom emotions; positive emotions; negative emotions; language education

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Introduction

Classroom emotions are the cornerstone of effective language education (Li et al., 2020; MacIntyre & Vincze, 2017). They not only reflect the psychological states of teachers and students but also influence the behavioral, cognitive, and emotional facets of the language education process (Kirkpatrick et al., 2024). Positive emotions, such as hope, enjoyment, and pride, often act as catalysts for engagement, motivation, and success, fostering an environment conducive to effective language education (Jin & Zhang, 2018). Conversely, negative emotions, including anxiety, boredom, and frustration, can hinder teachers' and students' classroom performance and limit their academic potential (Solhi et al., 2024; Xu et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2022).

Previous research on classroom emotions has relied on static, linear methods, which offer limited insights into their temporal and situational dynamics. These methods fail to account for the fluid, reciprocal interactions between teachers, students, and educational environments that characterize their emotional experiences (MacIntyre et al., 2020). This gap necessitates a shift toward innovative research methods that view classroom emotions as emergent phenomena within multifaceted systems. This introduction situates the current special issue within this paradigm shift, emphasizing the need for innovative methodologies to explore the dynamic interplay of emotions in language education contexts. By integrating theoretical perspectives with cutting-edge research methods, this special issue aims to advance our understanding of classroom emotions and their implications for educational practices.

Classroom Emotions: Positive and Negative Emotions

Positive emotions are pivotal in fostering a productive and supportive educational environment, benefiting both teachers and students (Dewaele & Li, 2020). For teachers, positive emotions such as pride and satisfaction are often derived from students' successes and their own professional achievements (Frenzel et al., 2021). Teachers who experience pride in their instructional methods or classroom outcomes are more likely to innovate and adapt their strategies to meet learners' needs (Wang et al., 2022). Similarly, hope plays a vital role for teachers, inspiring them to envision and work toward meaningful goals, such as fostering student development and creating inclusive classroom environments (Dewaele & Li, 2021). Teachers' positive emotions also contribute to their professional well-being and resilience, enabling them to navigate challenges with a constructive mindset (Fathi et al., 2023; Leng & Zhang, 2024; Sadeghi & Pourbahram, 2024). For students, positive emotions such as enjoyment enhance intrinsic motivation, enabling them to immerse themselves in language learning tasks and persevere through challenges (Derakhshan & Azari Noughabi, 2024). These emotions encourage active participation, collaborative engagement, and deeper cognitive processing, all of which are critical for academic success (Derakhshan & Fathi, 2023; Derakhshan & Yin, 2024; Estaji & Taghizadeh, 2024).

Negative emotions, though often viewed as detrimental, also hold significance for both students and teachers. For students, emotions such as anxiety can impair language performance, especially in high-stakes situations like oral exams or presentations (Jin et al., 2021). However, when managed effectively, moderate anxiety can act as a motivational force, driving students to prepare thoroughly (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2024). Similarly, frustration often arises when students struggle with difficult tasks, yet it can serve as a catalyst for problem-solving and resilience if appropriately addressed by teachers (Du & Yang, 2024). For teachers, negative emotions such as burnout and frustration are frequently linked to challenges in classroom management, workload pressures, or unmet expectations (Sadeghi & Khezrlou, 2016). Burnout, characterized by emotional exhaustion and detachment, can erode a teacher's ability to engage with students and

maintain professional satisfaction (Fathi et al., 2021). However, recognizing and addressing these emotions can lead to opportunities for growth and improved coping mechanisms (Li et al., 2024). For example, a teacher's frustration with students' lack of engagement might prompt reflective practices or professional development aimed at enhancing instructional methods (Sadeghi & Richards, 2021).

Emerging Research Methods: Complexity-Informed Approaches

Complexity-informed methodologies represent a transformative step in the study of classroom emotions (MacIntyre et al., 2020). Unlike traditional methods that view emotions as static and independent variables, these approaches emphasize their dynamic, interconnected, and context-sensitive nature (Derakhshan et al., 2023). They allow researchers to explore how emotions emerge, evolve, and interact with other psychological and contextual factors over time (Sampson, 2016, 2018). These methods include but are not limited to the following:

- **Time-Series Analysis:** By mapping emotional fluctuations over time, time-series analysis enables researchers to identify patterns and transitions in students' and teachers' emotional states. For example, this method can reveal how a student's anxiety decreases as they gain confidence in speaking a new language.
- **Nested Ecosystem Model:** This model examines emotions within interconnected systems, such as the classroom, school, and broader sociocultural context. It provides insights into how external factors, such as institutional policies or cultural norms, shape emotional experiences.
- **Ecological Momentary Assessment (EMA):** EMA captures emotions in real-time through mobile or wearable devices, offering a granular view of emotional responses to specific classroom events. This method minimizes recall bias and enhances the ecological validity of emotional data.
- **Q-Methodology:** Q-methodology allows researchers to explore subjective emotional experiences by identifying shared patterns of thought and feeling among participants. This approach is particularly useful for uncovering diverse emotional perspectives within a single classroom.
- **Retrodictive Qualitative Modeling (RQM):** RQM focuses on tracing the causes of observed emotional outcomes, helping researchers understand the triggers and consequences of specific emotional patterns.
- **Idiodynamic Method:** The idiodynamic method provides a micro-level analysis of emotional changes during specific tasks or interactions, revealing moment-to-moment shifts in affective states.
- **Latent Growth Curve Modeling (LGCM):** LGCM examines how emotions develop over extended periods, highlighting trends and predictors of emotional growth or decline. This approach is particularly valuable for longitudinal studies on teachers' and students' emotional development.

Introducing the Special Issue

This special issue brings together 10 empirical studies and two book reviews, each making a unique contribution to the study of classroom emotions. In the opening article, using latent growth curve modeling (LGCM), Kruk, Pawlak, Elahi Shirvan, and Taherian examine the co-development of the ideal L2 writing self, writing enjoyment, and writing anxiety over time, as well as their predictive role in L2 writing achievement. The results showed strong covariances across the three variables (i.e., L2 writing self, writing enjoyment, writing anxiety). The findings also demonstrated that whereas initial levels of these variables did not significantly predict L2 writing achievement, their development trajectories did. In the second paper, Yazan and Keleş discuss the potential of autoethnography as an innovative method to examine emotions in language education. They keep the autoethnographic focus on the nexus of personal, professional, and political dimensions of our lives as practitioners of autoethnography in particular and qualitative research in general. The next paper in this issue by Albert, Wind, and Csizér reports a study on 1152 secondary school students who were given a validated questionnaire to measure their L2 motivation and emotions (i.e., enjoyment, hope, pride, curiosity, anxiety, boredom, apathy, confusion, shame). The results of structural equation modeling (SEM) indicated that emotions like curiosity and pride can exert their influence through enjoyment while confusion and shame can do the same via anxiety. In the fourth research study, Kalantar provides new insights into the factors affecting shyness in EFL classrooms. He reports on a qualitative study unraveling the predictors of shyness among EFL students. The findings revealed that the majority of participants are shy and battle with negative emotions such as embarrassment, anxiety, low self-confidence, fear of making mistakes, and fear of being judged when speaking in EFL classrooms. These feelings were found to be intensified by negative classroom experiences, such as peer ridicule and judgmental attitudes during their formative years.

In another qualitative research, Wang and Wang probe the joint roles of emotion regulation and teacher support in shaping Chinese graduate students' academic engagement. The results indicated that students who exhibit higher levels of academic engagement employ a broader range of emotion regulation strategies and receive more diverse support from their teachers. In the sixth paper, using SEM, Derakhshan and Fathi assess the interplay between perceived teacher support, self-regulation, and psychological well-being among EFL students. The findings revealed a direct positive influence of perceived teacher support on psychological well-being. The findings also indicated that teacher support indirectly enhanced well-being by fostering self-regulation skills. On their part, Sadeghi and Rahmati review the poststructuralist-discursive research on language teacher emotion labor. The review outcomes demonstrated that that emotion labor experienced by language teachers in online and face-to-face instruction, the interplay of emotion labor, identity, and motivation, emotion labor caused by top-down assessment policies, and emotion labor due to institutional expectations in transnational and EMI/EAP/ESP contexts were among the most frequently investigated themes in the relevant body of literature.

In the eighth paper on this issue, Kırmızı and Irgatoğlu examine what emotions pre-service EFL teachers (PSTs) perceive, how they believe these emotions could be tackled, and what they could do in their future teaching to tackle these emotions. The findings of the study indicated that the PSTs went through a complex web of emotions ranging from positive ones including happiness, pride, or excitement to negative ones including frustration, anger, or dissatisfaction. In the ninth paper, Corral-Robles, Ortega-Martín, Martínez-Heredia, and González-Gijón evaluate the impact of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) on linguistic, digital, and emotional dimensions in older adults. The results showed that ICT can foster positive emotional outcomes, including confidence and social belonging. In the following study, Elmas examines how developing emotional agility skills affects future language teachers' personal and professional development. The study outcomes identified that emotional agility training can contribute to pre-service language teachers' personal and professional development providing them strategies to use

with their own students. Subsequently, Davari and Nourzadeh review the book titled “*Investigating Unequal Englishes: Understanding, Researching and Analysing Inequalities of the Englishes of the World*”. The authors provide a critical analysis of the book’s theoretical and methodological contributions, emphasizing its relevance for understanding the socio-emotional dimensions of English language teaching. The review highlights the book’s nuanced perspectives on how power imbalances and inequities manifest across Englishes, influencing language learners and teachers alike.

In the last paper of this issue, Mohebbi and Qasim Mahmood critically evaluate the book titled “*Cognitive Individual Differences in Second Language Acquisition: Theories, Assessment and Pedagogy*”. The authors provide a comprehensive analysis of this work, which explores the intricate interplay between cognitive variables and second language acquisition processes. They highlight the book’s detailed examination of theories such as working memory, attention, and aptitude, alongside its practical implications for assessment and pedagogy.

Conclusion

The study of classroom emotions in language education is a rich and evolving field that demands innovative methodologies to capture its inherent complexity. This special issue advances the discourse by integrating theoretical insights with methodological innovations, offering a robust framework for understanding the multifaceted nature of emotions in educational settings. The contributions in this issue highlight the potential of innovative research methods, notably complexity-informed approaches, to uncover the dynamic interplay of emotions and their implications for the language education process. The findings and discussions presented herein pave the way for future research, encouraging a deeper, more nuanced exploration of classroom emotions in language education contexts.

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